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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the effects of the language of patriarchy on the power of Native American women, how these women have retained power in their own societies, and how an understanding of Native women's values can aid feminists. An examination of Native American women's literature provides a connecting bridge back to a time before patriarchy and shows how Native languages and oral tradition have nurtured Native culture and values. This literature frequently draws on Native mythology and legends to express female awareness of the loss of traditional power and the importance of regaining its strength. It is a spiritual knowledge focusing on harmony and balance between the male and female aspects of life, and its language differs from the standard feminist rhetoric of proving equality with men. The efforts of patriarchal White society to negate the power and position of Native women are examined, highlighting the destructive influence of the "Indian princess" or Pocahontas image. The growing activism of Native American female poets, authors, and educators as they reestablish women's leadership and confront the problems of their communities is illustrated through their statements and fragments of their works. Contains 107 references. (SV)

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ED 362 345

COMMUNICATION AND THE POWER OF NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

BY

DIANNA TORSON

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
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COMMUNICATION AND THE POWER OF

NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the degree, Master of Arts, and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this thesis does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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Date

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Date

To

the ones I love

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Origin of the Study

The origin of this study is my innate interest in Native American cultures and their basic value systems.

The Native American Studies minor I completed for my B.A. degree enhanced this interest, as has my involvement with South Dakota State University's Native American Club and the Native American Advisory Committee.

My participation in a 1988 Speech/English/Drama Workshop, which emphasized Native American Literature, also contributed to this interest. From there I began to explore, analyze and connect a historical, descriptive study utilizing the literature of and about Native American women.

Statement of Purpose

I believe in a multi-cultural world. I believe that we should learn from other cultures. It seems, however, that because of patriarchy and its resultant ethnocentrism, many Americans have shut themselves off from other cultures. They have become victims of what

the renowned scholar Kenneth Burke says is a way of seeing that "is always a way of not seeing" (Jaeger 1988, 22). Or as the Sioux medicine man John (Fire) Lame Deer puts it, of "seeing with only one eye" (Lame Deer 1972, 190). The linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf believes "language has direct impact on behavior." In fact Whorf hypothesizes in his principle of linguistic relativity that "the structure of a human being's language influences the manner in which he understands reality and behaves with respect to it" (Whorf 1956, 23).

Intellectual thinking for centuries held that words from one language could be translated into any other language without loss of meaning. Whorf believed, however, that "A change in language can transform our appreciation of the Cosmos" (Whorf 1956, vii). Whorf reached these conclusions as a result of studying the Aztec, Maya, and Shawnee languages with major in-depth emphasis on the Hopi language. Whorf was concerned with basic mental operations. He was uncomfortable with the "straitjacket" represented by language (Whorf 1956, 23). He explored the field of language-psychology by the use of comparative linguistics and hoped to contribute to an eventual universal, international language. He developed the oligosynthetic principle which theorizes that Native American language structure is built from a few elements

that stand for certain general ideas. He utilized field research methods to develop a linguistic analysis of Hopi. He worked with a native speaker of Hopi who lived in New York City before he spent time on the Hopi reservation in Arizona. He prepared a grammar and dictionary of Hopi. From this he developed the idea that the native speaker of Hopi might hold a different mode of perceiving and conceiving things. He stated in a paper he read at a meeting of the Linguistic Society of America that "the Hopi actually have a language better equipped to deal with . . . vibratile phenomena than is our latest scientific technology" (Whorf 1956, 17).

In a paper titled "An American Indian Model of the Universe," he explained the Hopi verb system with regard to space and time. From his studies he understood that within Native American languages were "broad ideas or complexes of related ideas" which provided different "segmentations of experience" (Whorf 1956, 25-26). His research centered around what was being thought about.

Benjamin Lee Whorf's achievements came at a time when very little writing was being done by Native American women. His work revolved around the effect of language on thinking and knowing. One aspect of that is the effect of an enforced language on Native people.

His ideas fit well within the scope of this thesis. Native American women seem to have a different world view. Their ideas on regaining power seem different from the ideas of feminists achieving power. According to John B. Carroll, editor of Whorf's essays:

> One wonders, indeed, what makes the notion of linguistic relativity so fascinating even to the nonspecialist. Perhaps it is the suggestion that all one's life one has been tricked, all unaware, by the structure of language into a certain way of perceiving reality, with the implication that awareness of this trickery will enable one to see the world with fresh insight (Whorf 1956, 27).

Attention in this study will be drawn to the effects of the language of patriarchy on the power of Native American women. Their picture of the universe is very different from the two-valued, either-or thinking of the conquering patriarchal colonizing culture. Their ability to express themselves creatively in English, through the use of poetry and parables, may teach us something of their life, their language, and their world previously unexpressible. The study will suggest how understanding the Native American woman's value system could aid feminists. It will exemplify Whorf's cardinal hypothesis that the "structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one understands his environment" (Whorf, 1956, vi).

Procedures

In determining a way to approach this study, several people were consulted. The way obviously was not clear. Finally, advice from Aristotle became evident.

> Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussion, any more than in all the products of crafts . . . For it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just as far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs (Jaeger 1988, 15).

As the topic is broad, several suggestions were made that a narrowing to one or two tribal groups might aid in focusing and narrowing the study. However, I decided it would not include the range of Native American women writers needed to demonstrate any sort of trend. Therefore, material was chosen from available sources reflecting diverse tribal backgrounds, the criteria being that it was by or about Native American women.

My earlier reading suggested that Native American women, especially those motivated by traditional value systems, are regaining power. They have, however, not been involved in the feminist movement in America. Their position has been that within their own culture they are already free.

To determine the availability of scholarly material in this area a review of The Index to Journals in Communication Studies, edited by Matlon and Facciola, was conducted. On July 19, 1989, an extensive computer search was conducted at the Briggs library on the campus of South Dakota State University. The databases searched were Ageline, Drug Info & Alcohol Use & Abuse, Publications in Sociology, Psyc Info, Rehab Data, Soc Planning/Pol & Dev, Social Work Abstracts, Books in Print, Child abuse & Neglect, Dissertation Abstracts, Family Resources, Linguistics & Language Behavior, Magazine Index, PAIS International, Population Bibliography, PsycALERT, Social Sci Search, Sociological Abstracts, and MLA Bibliography. From these only Dissertation Abstracts and Sociological Abstracts yielded any results. These were (1) Rayna Green, "Native American Women;" (2) Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture;" and (3) Clara Sue Kidwell, "The Power of Women in Three American Indian Societies." It was determined that very little has been done in the area of Native American women and patriarchal power structures, particularly in the area of language, feminists, and communication.

A journal article by Rayna Green entitled "Native American Women" was published in Signs in 1980. In it

the author reviews the types of scholarly work achieved in the past. She believes most of it has been "selective, stereotyped, and damaging" (Green 1980, 249). She cites the literature as being anthropological, psychological, sociological, and historical. She believes the concerns have been about biological functions, social functions, and economic functions, with very little about real Native American women or real Native American categories of significance.

> Women as defective beings, psychologically and physically, or as inferior beings, socially, intellectually, and politically, are yet the interpretive frameworks within which Native American women are cast along with their non-Native American counterparts (Green 1980, 265).

She states, "Unless the scholarly agenda changes, we will learn less and less about Native American women" (Green 1980, 265-267).

Green's earlier article, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," provided historical background and insight into the building of the stereotypes (Green 1975).

Clara Sue Kidwell says in her article, "The Power of Women in Three American Indian Societies," published in The Journal of Ethnic Studies, that these stereotypes were created by a society dominated by males but that the

> persistency of values from traditional societies to contemporary times provides a source of power

> for American Indian women within their own societies, despite the relative powerlessness of Indian people in American society today (Kidwell 1978, 114).

In addition to material gleaned in the journal articles, letters were received from Dr. Beatrice Medicine and Anne Cameron, who provided ideas. Advice was solicited from Dr. Jack Marken, professor emeritus, South Dakota State University, who provided materials. And an interview was conducted with the Sioux artist Arthur Amiotte, who provided insight.

Reading was begun and notes were taken, in order to compile a historical, descriptive thesis which attempts to demonstrate that through female power and female remembering, there is a connecting bridge found in Native American women's literature back to a time before patriarchy, back to a connection with nature and an acceptance of women as women, back to a time of realization of inner strength and power and an acceptance of knowledge that is more than rational, and to a language and oral tradition which nurtured Native American values and culture.

Perspective

According to John Upton Terrell and Donna M. Terrell, authors of Indian Women of the Western Morning: Their Life in Early America:

> The concept that woman was made from man is not found in Indian religion. Indians accept and adhere to the doctrine that the female of their kind was created simultaneously with the male. For apparent reasons, each was endowed with peculiar qualities and sensibilities, neither was accorded supremacy, and each was made dependent upon the other for existence (Terrell and Terrell 1974, 1).

The Terrells contend that there is "nothing in any Indian mythology to suggest the principle that man preceded woman" (Terrell and Terrell 1974, 13).

Native American spiritual hierarchies included goddesses as well as gods, according to the Terrells. The tribal structure was often matrilineal, with women's rights the foundation of tribal society and government.

The Terrells add that among the tribes there were medicine women as well as medicine men, and that female healers "were believed to be possessed of supernatural powers that enabled them to diagnose and cure afflictions." There were also medicine women who "made no claim to possession of supernatural powers." These women were knowledgeable herbalists and midwives and were highly regarded by tribal members (Terrell and Terrell, 1974, 167).

Bea Medicine, in The Native American Woman: A Perspective, discusses many aspects of the life of Native American women from past to present. She does not portray the role of Native American women in any

glamorous way, but rather attempts to describe the "variety of Indian women" (Medicine 1978, 1). Dr. Medicine states that in 1974 she taught a course at Dartmouth College entitled, "The Role of Women in Native American Societies," and at that time there were very few Native American women involved in the Women's Liberation Movement. The response of the Native American woman to the question of why this was, according to Dr. Medicine, was often: "Why should I belong? I'm already liberated" (Medicine 1978, 3). In her course, she explored whether this statement was really true in modern society. She states:

> From that time during which Native cultures operated in a state of distinctive equilibria before the onslaught of the dominant culture, tribal cultures have constantly undergone and reacted to forces of cultural change . . . (Medicine 1978, 4).

That time "during which Native cultures operated in a state of distinctive equilibria" is the time of remembering to which modern Native American women writers refer; a time before tribal societies were forced to change. These writers are looking back to a time before the European conquerors and the "change agents," of "trappers, traders, missionaries, Army personnel, and other assorted immigrants," who forced acculturation upon the Native people (Medicine 1978, 79).

This forced acculturation, viewed from present day perspectives, also provides an opportunity to analyze results aided by new understandings in the studies of interpersonal communication. The use of language to attempt to destroy Native American women's self-concepts and self-esteem, are obvious in many areas. For example, the development of negative stereotypes as a consequence of the Pocahontas Perplex will be examined. The power of communication to cause one to cheerfully accept the fact that one's culture is dying will be described. And especially, the way Native American women are regaining their positive self-concepts and their power through language will also be examined. According to Howard Giles and John M. Wiemann in the The Handbook of Communication Science (edited by Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee), "Language and power are central to understanding human social life" (Giles and Wiemann 1987, 372). A model is provided that shows the interrelatedness of:

> self-concept/social identity - social comparison - self-esteem - social influence needs - language behaviors - social cognitions - self-presentation (Giles and Wiemann 1987, 368).

Understanding interrelatedness and discovering connections is the key component found in the rhetoric, writing, and actions of Native American women. And as they regain their lost power they provide a model for feminists as they continue to struggle for equality.

Certain Native American women writers are taking a first step toward recovering a feminine value system; toward defining the feminine system and its power. Paula Gunn Allen, author of The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions, believes we need to learn about self-directing women whose major concern is the welfare of the young and about reestablishing societies where powerful women are central to social well-being (Allen 1986, 3).

Allen's book contains a chapter entitled "Who is Your Mother? Red Roots of White Feminism," in which she talks of remembering, rather than forgetting the past. She talks of this remembering causing an Indianization of society:

> But regardless of official versions of relations between Indians and whites or other segments of the American population, the fact remains that great numbers of apparently "white" or "Black" Americans carry notable degrees of Indian blood. With that blood has come the culture of the Indian . . . (Allen 1986, 216).

According to Allen, this is the root of our society's remembering and the basis for a possible Indianization of modern culture (Allen 1986, 216). She sees Indianization as a strong influence in American society today, stating that:

> Third- and fourth-generation Americans indulge in growing nudity, informality in social relations, egalitarianism, and the rearing of women who value autonomy, strength, freedom, and personal dignity . . . (Allen 1986, 217).

Coinciding with that idea, she also notes that "permissive" childrearing practices are becoming more popular in America and a movement away from the physical and psychological abuse of children is gaining strength. She states that Native Americans "did not believe that children are born in sin, are congenitally predisposed to evil . . ." (Allen 1986, 216-17). These are beliefs that she suggests are passing into white culture from Native American culture.

Anne Cameron's Daughters of Copper Women, published in 1981, celebrates feminine power and remembering. Cameron calls for women to become strong as women once again.

Cameron states that she was "given permission to tell the stories in her book by women who are members of a secret society whose roots go back beyond recorded history to the dawn of Time itself." She says, "There is

a better way of doing things. Some of us remember that better way" (Cameron 1981, preface).

Her stories are mythological tracings of women from the beginning of time until the present day. They speak of change and enduring and female power. The final story, "The Face of Old Woman," is about "Granny." Granny believes:

> Women are bringing the pieces of the truth together. Women are believing again that we have a right to be whole. Scattered pieces from the black sisters, from the yellow sisters, from the white sisters, are coming together, trying to form a whole, and it can't form without the pieces we have saved and cherished (Cameron 1981, 145).

Granny is referring to the remembering. The threads of connection to the before-patriarchy-past that remain in Native cultures.

This idea is supported by Sandra Lee Bartkey, a philosopher at the University of Illinois. In her essay, "Women are Not Free," in Classic Philosophical Questions, edited by James A. Gould, she states:

> A culture has a global character; the limits of my culture are the limits of my world. The subordination of women, then, because it is so pervasive a feature of my culture, will (if uncontested) appear to be natural--and because it is natural, unalterable. Unlike a colonized people, women have no memory of a "time before;" a time before the masters came, a time before we were subjugated and ruled. Further, since one function of cultural identity is to allow me to distinguish those who are like me from those who are not, I may feel more kinship with those who share my culture, even though they oppress me,

> than with the women of another culture, whose whole experience of life may well be closer to my own than to any man's (Bartkey 1985, 562).

In the same book, William T. Blackstone says,

> The women's liberation movement is a complex phenomenon. Within it there are widely different views of the causes of the oppression of women, and consequently, widely different views of what is required to overcome that oppression. Put in a different way, the movement includes widely different views of what constitutes a free person in the social and political sense and, hence, different views of the sort of society required to assure freedom (Blackstone 1985, 574).

This American male philosopher admits that oppression exists. He then discusses several positions within the feminist movement, including traditionalism, liberalism, radicalism, and one he calls "radical feminists" (Blackstone 1985, 576).

According to Blackstone, the traditionalist stance says that everything is all right the way it is. The traditionalist believes that women are and should be passive, submissive, with sex-differentiated labor and sex stereotyping where the restriction of females is not oppression but the fulfillment of women's nature. The liberal argues that sex-role stereotyping causes great social injustice, and thinks freedom can be had by reforming the system. The radical believes freedom can only be had by overthrowing the political system. The other type of radical feminist believes liberation for females is possible only by overcoming biological

differences through technology, and believes, according to Blackstone, that artificial reproduction "will free women from their biological inequalities, and subsequently, from social inequalities" (Blackstone 1985, 576).

Interestingly, none of these feminist positions are Native American feminine positions of regaining lost power; except for the traditionalist viewpoint, these feminist ideas speak of achieving power.

Jane DeHart-Mathews, writing about the Woman's Movement, sums up a discussion by saying: "The tension between past position and future possibility, however, demands of all women--not merely feminists--a definition of self that extends beyond the definitions of the past" (DeHart-Mathews 1987, 462).

Beyond the limited definitions of the patriarchal past is where the Native American contemporary woman writer may be. Therefore, this thesis will explore the feminine value system of traditional Native American women. It will show, in Chapter II, that Native American women had power. How the power was diminished by the conquering patriarchal culture will be discussed in Chapter III. It will also show in Chapter IV, that there is a current, ongoing attempt to regain that power

expressed in the rhetoric, the writing, and the actions of Native American women.

CHAPTER II

THE RICHNESS OF WOMEN'S POWER IN NATIVE AMERICAN MYTH

Native Language Reflected Native Women

I am the sea
I am the mountains
I am the light
I am eternal

Anne Cameron
Daughters of Copper Woman

There have been many books written by and about Native American women. Whether they are novels, poetry, autobiographies, or anthologies, these books express awareness of the loss of traditional power, and the importance of regaining its strength. It is a spiritual knowledge, and its language differs from the standard feminist rhetoric focused on proving equality with men. As Heartwarrior Chosa, the Sundancer and Pipecarrier, stated to me this summer, "Feminists have always thought the power is in the pants, not knowing that it is really in the skirt" (Conversation at Green Grass, South Dakota, June 1989). Native American women have always known this and are now expressing it.

Gertrude Buckanaga, an Ojibwe woman, says: "Indian women have always been strong. They've kept families together" (Buckanaga 1977, 122). And Joseph Bruchac, in conversation with Paula Gunn Allen, states that some of the strongest people he knows are "Indian women over the age of forty" (Bruchac 1987, 12). Yet in the white culture, the opposite seems obvious. Elders are often discarded, thrown into nursing homes. According to Allen, women in the dominant culture between the ages of thirty-five and seventy-five "think of ways to placate people so they won't punish you and they won't ignore you and they won't abandon you." Even in the age of feminists, women dye their hair and have face lifts to hide the fact they are older, revealing the fact that they cannot truly accept themselves. In Native American culture, according to Allen, "Old women are powerful" and they become "singular with vibrancy," and, according to her, they are "the most beautiful of all," just as "leaves get before they fall" (Allen 1987, 12-13).

Creation Legends

Equality can be found in the creation legends of many of the tribes. In the Navajo legend, "Creation of First Man and First Woman," four mysterious gods tell the Navajo people that they have "bodies like ours, but you have the teeth, the feet, and the claws of beasts and

insects. The new humans will have hands and feet like ours. Also, you are unclean; you smell bad." Twelve days later the gods return, and with two ears of corn and the help of sacred buckskin, and two eagle feathers, they create man and woman. "The white ear of corn had become the man, the yellow ear the woman, First Man and First Woman" (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 40).

A popular Sioux creation story is centered around a woman. A beautiful girl is the only human survivor of a great flood. She is saved by a big spotted eagle, Wanblee Galeshka, who takes her to his home in the Black Hills where she conceives and gives birth to twins, a boy and a girl. It is from this union of the woman and the spotted eagle that the Great Sioux Nation descended (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 93-95).

In an Iroquois traditional story, a certain young woman follows her dead father's advice to marry a sorcerer. It is noted that she should have taken her mother's advice, which was not to marry the sorcerer. But she proposes to the man and he says she will have to meet his tests before he will take her as his wife.

Consequently she grinds corn for him. She endures burns from cooking and torments from wild beasts, meeting tests, and they are finally married. He gives gifts to her people in the village.

This woman loves a certain tree that grows outside her husband's lodge, and while sleeping under it she conceives from a blossom of the tree. This causes her husband to become weak, and fearing her power to be greater than his, he devises a plan to uproot the tree, convince her to jump into the hole, then replace the tree. His advisors believe he will then recover his health. He talks her into jumping into the hole from which can be seen a beautiful place, "a shining blue world." She jumps and consequently creates earth, the sun, and the moon (Allen 1989, 56-58).

This story demonstrates the regard held for women and the power they hold, since the Sacred Woman in the story is actually the creator of the world. The mainstream culture has regarded stories like these as folklore and myth in the most negative senses of those words. Yet as times change and new ways of thinking based on research and experience using different criteria emerge, myth is now being considered to be as much truth as the most elaborately and carefully conducted scientific experiment. As Allen states in an essay in the American Indian Culture and Research Journal, Americans have a "myth about myth . . . and this metamyth is the belief that there is such a thing as determinable fact, natural (right) explanations, reality that can be

determined outside the human agency of discovery, fact-finding, and determination" (Allen 1974, 3).

The psychologist M. Scott Peck, in The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace, also addresses this idea, saying:

> To most people a myth is a tall tale, a story that is not true or real. Increasingly, however, psychologists are coming to realize that myths are myths precisely because they are true. Myths are found in one form or another in culture after culture, age after age. The reason for their permanence and universality is precisely that they are embodiments of great truths (Peck 1987, 171-72).

Peck explains that myths are required to contain and embrace the richness of human nature, because human nature is multifaceted and complex. He believes that to define human nature in simplistic ways is not to do its richness justice, and in fact is extremely dangerous (Peck 1987, 172-73).

Value of Women Legends

"Corn Mother," a legend of the Penobscot tribe, explains the importance of women. The legend describes the time when there were no people, and only Kloskurbeh the All-maker and his nephew lived on earth. They had created many things when a beautiful girl came to them, "born of the wonderful earth plant, and of the dew, and of warmth." The nephew married her, and she conceived, and from this was the beginning of human beings. She was

known as First Mother, and when the people were starving she instructed her husband to kill her;

> So it was done. The husband slew his wife and her sons, praying, dragged her body to and fro as she had commanded, until her flesh covered all the earth. They took up her bones and buried them in the middle of it (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 11).

As instructed, seven "moons" later they returned and found that First Mother's flesh was corn and First Mother's bones were sacred tobacco.

First Mother's husband told the people:

> . . . take good care of First Mother's flesh, because it is her goodness become substance. Take good care of her breath, because it is her love turned into smoke. Remember her and think of her whenever you eat, whenever you smoke this sacred plant, because she has given her life so that you might live. Yet she is not dead, she lives: in undying love she renews herself again and again (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 13).

The Creek poet Joy Harjo says women "reach an androgynous kind of spirit where they are very strong people . . . and yet to be strong does not mean to be male, to be strong does not mean to lose femininity, which is what the dominant culture has taught" (Harjo 1987, 97).

Native Americans traditionally value age and the wisdom that comes with it. In fact, the goal in life is to achieve wisdom through age. In her article, "Native American Women," Rayna Green says: "They look forward to

being old--an elder--when their words, actions, and leadership come to be respected" (Green 1980, 263).

In "The Old Woman of the Spring," a Cheyenne legend, two young men go to an old woman who sits near the entrance of a large cave cooking buffalo meat in one pot and corn in another. When they tell her that they and their people are hungry, she gives them "corn from one pot and meat from the other" but even after they have had enough the pots are "still full." Then she tells them to "look toward the south," and they see that the land in that direction is "covered with buffalo." She tells them to "look to the west," and they see "all kinds of animals, large and small, including ponies, though they knew nothing of ponies in those days." She tells them to "look toward the north," and they see "corn growing everywhere." Because of her, the Cheyenne still believe that this brought corn and buffalo (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 26-28).

In a Cochiti story, "Salt Woman is Refused Food," Old Salt Woman and her grandson are begging for food, and when no one will feed them, she uses her magic crystal to turn the children into birds. Then she and her grandson travel on and find a place where they are "well treated and fed." She leaves them some of her flesh. It is salt, and until this time people cooked without salt.

Old Salt Woman tells them to "remember that if I am in your food, it will always taste better." Then she goes to Salt Lake to stay (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 61). According to the authors, the procuring of salt is still associated with solemn ceremonies in the Southwest. "The mythic figure associated with salt is almost always an old woman . . ." (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 62).

Traditionally, children looked forward to learning "spiritual insights" and "lessons of the human spirit" from their elders so that they might become wise themselves (Woodard 1989, 10). But today's majority culture tends to devalue the old, especially women, thinking technology has advanced beyond the knowledge of the elderly.

Woman Power of Perpetuation

"The Great Medicine Dance" of the Cheyenne explains the beginning of the Sundance, and the "woman-power of perpetuation" is acknowledged. In the legend, the Cheyenne people are starving. Because of a drought, "the earth itself was starving." Then a young medicine man approaches a beautiful woman and begs her to give him something to eat. She feeds him a bowl of dog soup. Then he says: "I have chosen you from among all women to help me save our people." Together they travel north, as medicine spirits have commanded. Every evening the woman

puts up the tipi and makes separate, soft sage beds for them. When she inquires as to why they never sleep together as man and woman, he explains: "We must abstain from embracing until we enter the great mountain of the north and receive the sacred medicine dance. After we emerge from the mountain, I shall embrace you in a renewal-of-all-life ceremony by which people will continue to be born, generation after generation, through the woman-power of perpetuation" (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 33-35).

At last they come to a mountain, and behind a large rock they find an entrance. Inside they find themselves "in the mountain's great medicine lodge." Then they hear the voices of the Creator and his helper, "Great Roaring Thunder." The voices instruct them how to perform the sacred ceremony, the Sundance. If performed in the right way, they will be "favored for generations to come." The young medicine man is given a sacred hat to wear when he performs the Sundance. With this hat he will be able to control the animals so his people will never again starve. As soon as the couple leave the mountain, "buffalo without numbers streamed out of the mountain behind them, and the earth brought forth green shoots . . . the earth was like new, glistening in freshness." At some time during the journey back to

their village, the man and woman do "lovingly what was necessary to ensure renewal and continuation of life through woman-power" (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 33-37).

Women as Heroes

In a story by Zitkala Sa in Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women, by Paula Gunn Allen, Tusee, a beautiful young woman, rides with the elderly women accompanying the men on a raid. They ride for a day and then camp in separate tipis at night. The men stay in one tipi. The women including Tusee stay in a separate tipi, because it was known that to be together would weaken the group. In the morning the men attack while the women hide out nearby. Later they discover that Tusee's lover has been captured. The description of Tusee waiting for night so that she can free her lover is one of feminine strength: "Her hand rests on a long knife in her belt," and "With a panther's tread and pace she climbs the high ridge beyond the low ravine . . . rooted to the barren bluff the slender woman's figure stands on the pinnacle of night, outlined against a starry sky" (Zitkala Sa 1989, 33-34), she prays,

> Great Spirit, speed me to my lover's rescue! Give me swift cunning for a weapon this night! All-powerful Spirit, grant me my warrior-father's heart, strong to slay a foe and mighty to save a friend (Zitkala Sa 1989, 34).

She lures the man who captured her lover away from the area, then springs on him, hissing between her teeth, "I am a Dakota woman," and kills him with "her unerring long knife." Then, disguised as an old woman, she goes into the camp and cuts the ropes that hold her lover to a center pole. When she sees his weakness, a "mighty power thrills her body" and she "lifts him upon her broad shoulders . . . and carries him away into the open night" (Zitkala Sa 1989, 36).

Typically Native American women do not like to talk about themselves. Culturally, it is not the thing to do. Yet, in Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women, Pretty Shield, a Crow wise woman, tells how a 60-year-old woman won a fight against Sioux warriors by singing her Medicine song and riding straight out at them. She had the support of the rest of the camp who were also singing. The Sioux were afraid of her and ran away (Pretty Shield 1989, 27-29).

Allen recounts an Oneida traditional story, "The Warrior Maiden," which she says, is still handed down through generations of Oneidas. Aliqiupso's people are in hiding after attack by the Mingos and they are starving. She allows herself to be captured by the enemy and then under torture says she will reveal where her

people are hiding. However, this is exactly what she had planned. She leads the enemy into a trap where she dies, sacrificing herself for her people. The Mingo survivors leave and never attack her people again (Allen 1989, 53-55).

Harmony and Balance

Traditionally Native women were able to function as the essential strength in tribal life. The men often were gone and the women were relied on to "maintain stability in community life" (Katz 1977, xvii). The ideal life was one of harmony and balance where men and women relied on each other.

In a wonderful Blood-Piegan story of "How Men and Women Got Together," the men live in one camp and the women in another. Looking at each other secretly, they admire each other's capabilities. The men see that the women have "fine tipis and fine clothes." The women see that the men have sharp shooting sticks and are never hungry (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 42).

At this time they are unaware of sexual pleasure, so after many unsuccessful attempts to come together, both the men and women dress properly and accept each other and discover sexual pleasure. Old Man mates with the woman Chief and says, "This is surely the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me. I couldn't

ever imagine such a wonderful thing" (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 45).

The woman Chief says, "And I never dreamed I could feel so good." They decide to go and tell the others, but discover that they have already paired off and have disappeared. When they return, "Their eyes were smiling. Their mouths were smiling, their whole bodies were smiling" (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 45).

> Then the women moved in with the men. They brought all their things, all their skills to the men's village. Then the women quilled and tanned for the men. Then the men hunted for the women. Then there was love. Then there was happiness. Then there was marriage. Then there were children (Erdoes and Ortiz, 1984, 45).

This story demonstrates the egalitarian approach to life found in Native American culture. The Chief remarks, "This is surely the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me," which is a clear contrast to majority culture view where the man is the initiator. The woman Chief expresses her delight, in an equal emphasis of pleasure, also demonstrating the difference in societal values. Then together, equally, they produce children and happiness.

In white culture on this continent, women have had to prove that they are even human beings. This has been difficult, since women have been taught to think of themselves as "uncertain, anxious, nervous, hasty,

careless, fearful, dull, childish, helpless, sorry, timid, clumsy, stupid, silly, and domestic" (Campbell 1973, 78).

Contrastingly, where white males have historically devalued the role of women, the Native American male has given it great respect. For instance, Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, a Paiute woman born in 1844, says that after the birth of the first child:

> Both father and mother fast from all flesh, and the father goes through the labor of piling the wood for twenty-five days, and assumes all his wife's household work during that time. If he does not do his part in the care of the child, he is considered an outcast (Hopkins 1977, 11).

According to legend, the Sioux people did not know how to live before the White Buffalo Calf Woman came to them. She instructed them in many things and gave them the buffalo and their sacred pipe. One of the things she said to the women was, "You are from the mother earth. What you are doing is as great as what the warriors do" (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984, 47-52).

There was an egalitarian sociopolitical system embedded in the culture through myth and legend, and it is quite different from the European habit of ranking of duties into hierarchical layers of status which make women's domestic duties inferior to men's. According to Rebecca Tsosie, "American Indians generally perceived

women and men as individuals with specific talents, abilities and clan-sanctioned roles" (Tsosie 1984, 5-6).

Waterlily, by Ella Deloria, a novel which recreates the Teton Sioux lifestyle before the white settlement of the western plains, was written from the perspective of a Native American woman and focuses on the Native American woman. The roles of the men, women, and children are well-delineated and high societal regard for women is evident. For example, when the warrior, Bear Heart, takes certain young boys into training he is "honoring the women of his generation, whom he had been taught to respect, protect, and aid" (Deloria 1988, 63).

Although it is a novel, the background material for it comes from Deloria's anthropological studies and years spent with Franz Boas, and her experiences with her own Sioux culture.

This novel, which was never published in the author's lifetime, recreates traditional Sioux ways. These were the ways Deloria, a writer and ethnologist, had been close to. And writing from a woman's perspective, she gives us an insight into camp life that has not been normally noticed.

In Deloria's own words about the novel: "We shall go back to a time prior to white settlement of the western plains, when native custom and thought were all

there was, and we shall examine certain of the most significant elements in the old life" (Deloria 1988, x). The novel demonstrates an egalitarian sense to living, where the value of each person was important, whether male or female. It was a time in which, if a woman found her marriage disagreeable, she could leave it without explanation because she had security in her extended family. It was a time when marriage did not seem to be the distinguishing factor in a woman's life, because "almost any woman could marry somebody . . ." (Deloria 1988, 180). It was a time in which elderly Native American women were held in high regard and given the right to scold their own sons if they were treating their wives badly, demonstrating the closeness of women and the regard for them from other women. There was a traditional recognition of a respect for one another, where each gender had its role and was highly regarded.

In Speaking of Indians, Deloria says, "No Dakota lived unto himself alone," and therefore was careful not to risk his life, "thereby bringing tears to the eyes of his relatives--especially his sisters and women cousins, to whom he owed the very highest respect and consideration" (Deloria 1979, 22).

In The New Indians, Steiner says: "When women led by being women, they held together the tribe and

family by their act of being. Unobtrusive, soft spoken, quiet women did not have to act like men" (Steiner 1968, 215).

Women were important in tribal life. In the stories about creation, the sacredness of Mother Earth is always central. She was where human beings came from. "She was an earthy goddess, indeed, for she was the biological, as well as the agricultural, as well as the spiritual giver of life" (Steiner 1968, 219).

Historically, white culture has acknowledged that the Iroquois were democratic and matrilineal. And it is known that the men of that nation conceded the power to decide when to go to war to the women when the women "proclaimed a boycott on love-making and childbearing" (Steiner 1968, 219-20). Their constitution states that the Great Spirit

> . . . caused the body of our mother, the woman, to be of a great worth and honor. He proposed that she shall be endowed and entrusted with the birth and the upbringing of men, . . . and moreover that the warriors shall be her assistants (Steiner 1968, 220).

As a result of the conquering culture forcing partriarchy on the Native culture, "Women were conspicuously absent from the hundreds of tribal delegations brought to Washington by the government in the late 1800s" (Steiner 1968, 221).

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, a South Dakota writer, poet, and editor of Wicazo Sa Review, explains that "Most of the time Christians thought that only men were people of importance, that the father and the brother were the important people" (Cook-Lynn 1987, 63). Consequently Native American women were ignored by the government, and the Native American male elevated to an unaccustomed position.

Although we have few recorded speeches by any Native women, Thomas Louis Jones has reprinted the entire speech of Warcaziwin (Sunflower), a Sioux woman, which she gave in 1930. She admonished historians for inaccurate accounts and inadequate histories of Native Americans who were

> . . . making history thousands of years before the advent of the white men to these shores . . . for centuries in Europe both children and women occupied a low social position. On the other hand, they, the white men, found the Indian woman and child occupying a very high social position (Warcaziwin 1965, 116).

Native American women had power, and that power came from being women. There was a sexual division manifested in all aspects of life, including labor, behavior, and even speech patterns--but no lessening of regard, according to Raymond DeMallie's essay on Lakota culture in The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women (DeMallie 1983, 240).

DeMallie continues: "Women's power, on the whole, was associated with domestic matters, while men's power dealt with the dangers of life outside the camp circle" (DeMallie 1983, 241).

According to DeMallie, women were considered extremely powerful during their menstrual periods, and were isolated from men only because their power was at odds with the power of men. He states: "Various taboos surrounded women's behavior, particularly while menstruating, to prevent the clash between the women's power and men's power" (DeMallie 1983, 259).

According to Clara Sue Kidwell, "The puberty rite for girls almost universal in Indian communities . . . served as an indication of the connection between women's biological and social functions." She continues:

> The beginning of the female menstrual cycle has been, in its ceremonial significance, the validation of the woman's role in society. Her isolation from the rest of society during this time has been a recognition of the power that descended on her. In traditional communities her glance would deprive hunters of their power; her presence at certain ceremonies would anger the spirits and cause them to withdraw their favors from the people. In very drastic fashion the physical manifestation of her femininity both prepared her to bring forth new life and yet bestowed on her the power to destroy the life forces and powers of others (Kidwell 1978, 115).

According to the authors of American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives, Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands:

> The belief that Native American women do not need the feminist movement is consistent with the role Indian women have played within their societies through the years. Recent autobiographies reaffirm this belief. The roles described by Indian women in traditional societies reveal the power that is alluded to by contemporary Indian women in their autobiographies (Bataille and Sands 1984, 129).

In her autobiography, compiled by Nancy O. Lurie, Mountain Wolf Woman, a Winnebago from Wisconsin, described her unhappiness with her first husband, and how she dissolved the marriage. She was unhappy because her husband was a very jealous man and had accused her of having affairs with other men. She simply told him to go back to his own people--which he did, reluctantly, and she went to stay with her family, and it was over. She remained single for a time before re-marrying. That was her decision (Wolf Woman 1961, 45-46).

Mountain Wolf Woman demonstrated this strength and power again, after she had moved to Martin, South Dakota, with her second husband, who was a mailman. Lonely and homesick for her relatives, she told him "Stay here and be the mailman. . . . As for myself, I am going to go home." He went with her (Mountain Wolf Woman 1961, 45-46).

The Sioux Medicine Man Lame Deer says: "A woman could divorce her husband too, simply by throwing all his things out of her tipi. He'd know what that meant; Get

out and don't come back" (Lame Deer and Erdoes 1972, 136).

Lame Deer talks of the traditional regard for women and mentions the days when men never talked to their mothers-in-law. There was a Native American man who had an old woman for a friend, but he fell in love with the old woman's daughter and they lived together and had children. He would not marry her, however, because then he would not be able to be the old woman's friend (Lame Deer and Erdoes 1972, 138).

In Charles Woodard's Ancestral Voices: Conversations with N. Scott Momaday, the power of woman is discussed. In Momaday's work women are often central to the story. Momaday says women were at the center because they were indispensable. "They are life bringers . . . they are sacred" (Momaday 1989, 89).

He goes on to say that because of stereotypes, people "think of the plains cultures as patriarchal," and says "That's a false view" (Woodard 1989, 66). Women were not always visible but "the most powerful things are usually less visible than the visible things." Momaday believes it is the "women who . . . hold the knowledge" (Momaday 1989, 91).

CHAPTER III

THE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF PATRIARCHAL LANGUAGE ON NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

The Pocahantas Perplex

> You can see me, I am sick and I hurt every day. The soldiers nearly kill me. I never done them any harm or any other white man. That Massacre was very wrong to the Indians and Big Foot didn't want to fight the soldiers. He always had a white flag so that they would know he was for peace and for the treaty.
>
> The soldiers did not fire in our camp till the guns were put down at Big Foot's teepee. Before they shot us some of them came to our tents and wagons and the women. They took our knives and axes. After this they killed us and our children. We tried to run but they shot us like we were buffalo. I know there are some good white people, but the soldiers must be mean to shoot children and women. Indian soldiers would not do that to white children.
>
> Louise Weasel Bear
> "Statements of the Survivors"
> The Wounded Knee Massacre

The idea that Native American women of North America had power is amply supported by legend and literature. Why Native American women lost their power can also be understood from that literature.

The "Pocahontas Perplex," according to Rayna Green, "emerged as a controlling metaphor in the American

experience." It was a major reason why Native American women lost power. This metaphor portrayed Native American women saving white men from Native Americans. The Native American woman became a princess, "the Christian, English lady . . . for her English husband and her faithful audience for all time." This helped to create the misleading mental image that "the only good Indian--male or female, . . . rescues and helps white men." Consequently, the idea was implanted in the Native American woman's mind as well that "to be 'good,' she must defy her own people, exile herself from them, become white . . ." (Green 1975, 700-704).

Patriarchy, the male dominated, hierarchical social system brought from Europe, produced the "Pocahontas Perplex" by developing "a model for the national understanding of Indian women . . ." The self-concept of Native American women was damaged when they accepted the "Princess" idea that they must abandon their culture in order to be accepted by the white society (Green 1975, 701).

Ironically, the Native American woman who accepted this stereotype found that in the eyes of America, she could not be a real woman. If she was not the "princess" she was not acceptable, she was nothing. In America's eyes, the real woman, anything less than the

"Princess," was the "Squaw." According to the stereotype of the "Pocahontas Perplex," squaws shared "in the same vices attributed to Indian men--drunkenness, stupidity, thievery, venality of every kind . . ." Green states that "As the squaw, a depersonalized object of scornful convenience, she is powerless . . . easily destroyed without reference to her humanity" (Green 1975, 711-713).

Women in the majority culture allowed this destruction to occur because, as Bartkey believes, they did not identify with the women from another culture, but with the hierarchical, patriarchal men of their own. They were victims as much as the Native American women were victims, for they were not allowed to see with "more than one eye" (Lame Deer 1972, 190). Their minds were closed to other ways of being.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy pardons evils in the guise of protection. According to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, patriarchy is the "social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line" (Webster 1985, 863). The patriarchal philosophy conflicts with the traditional Native American ideas. The father was not supreme, the wives and children were not legally

dependent on him and the descent and inheritance was not through the father.

In The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine In American Indian Traditions, Paula Gunn Allen sees beyond the benign description and states that "Patriarchy requires that powerful women be discredited so that its own system will seem to be the only one that reasonable or intelligent people can subscribe to" (Allen 1986, 203). Lame Deer believed "We must learn to be different, to feel and taste the manifold things that are us" (Lame Deer 1972, 146). Sadly, personhood is what patriarchy denies, and because women in the majority culture were not allowed to view life beyond patriarchy, their world view became closed.

According to Charlene Spretnak, editor of a compilation of essays entitled The Politics of Women's Spirituality,

> The objective of patriarchy was and is to prevent women from achieving, or even supposing . . . [their] potential: that . . . [they] are powerful in both mind and body and that the totality of those powers is a potent force (Spretnak 1982, xii).

The European culture was a victim of itself and could not understand the Native American culture because it could not listen. It was incapable of "seeing" another way of being. It could not discard preconceived intellectual images and words, and therefore could feel

no empathy with a people suffering cultural genocide. As Scot Peck states:

> Unless we empty ourselves of . . . preconceived cultural or intellectual images and expectations, we not only cannot understand the Other, we cannot even listen. Indeed, we cannot even feel empathy (Peck 1987, 214).

Other Ways of Being

Paula Gunn Allen says in Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs that Native American thought is "mystical and psychic with an enduring sense of the fluidity and malleability, or creative flux, of things" (Allen 1983, 15). She contends the Westerner's bias with respect to non-ordinary states of consciousness is

> as unthinking as the Indian's belief in them is said to be . . . it is the result of an intellectual climate . . . that has reached its culmination in Freudian and Darwinian theories . . . has had many unfortunate side effects . . . one of which is the deep misunderstanding of tribal literatures . . . (Allen 1983, 15).

According to Allen, the tribal person perceives things as alive and able to grow and change and thus able to be manipulated under certain conditions and according to certain laws. These laws are called "walking in a sacred manner" (Sioux), "standing in the center of the world" (Navajo), "having a tradition" (Pomo); each tribe refers to it differently (Allen 1983, 15).

The stories she has collected in Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women are about "being conquered, about losing the right and authority to control personal and community life." She says: "No holocaust in this millennium has been more destructive, and no survivors more helplessly victimized long after the shooting ended" (Allen 1983, 21).

In The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions she states:

> Western studies of American Indian tribal systems are erroneous at base because they view tribalism from the cultural bias of patriarchy and thus either discount, degrade, or conceal gynocratic features or recontextualize those features so that they will appear patriarchal (Allen 1983, 4).

Allen says the idea that Native Americans must "assimilate or perish" is a result of what she terms the "Progressive Fallacy," which ". . . allows American Indians victim status only," and is a result of the American belief in progress and evolution. She states that it "is a root cause of the genocide practiced against American Indians since the colonial period" (Allen 1983, 5).

In The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women, the issue of stereotyping is addressed by Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine. Published in 1983, it is a study of tribal groups of the Northern plains which

focuses on the female. It deals with women in modern reservation settings, while providing insight into a time before European contact.

One contributing author, Katherine M. Weist, explains the myth of the "Beast of Burden," which began with initial encounters and continues to modern times. It has only recently been revealed as a misinterpretation. Native American women were described through the blinders of cultural bias. They were seen through the eyes of patriarchal men. With no attempt made to change view points, they were categorized and stereotyped. Explorers and traders and missionaries came to the same conclusions, calling them "infuriated brutes," "beasts of burden," "slaves," "menials," "courtesans," "obscenely vulgar," and "sexually lax." "The overriding emphasis was an explicitly negative estimation of the position of Indian women . . ." (Weist 1983, 23-26). Only if Native American women married white men could they escape this stereotype.

Weist believes that because the male observer had to cross a cultural barrier as well as a gender barrier, "The assessments of the position of Indian women by Euro-American men should be viewed with skepticism . . ." (Weist 1983, 39).

Crossing these barriers would require "seeing with more than one eye" (Lame Deer 1972, 190). The European male was not conditioned to do this kind of seeing. Some were quite cynical:

> . . . an Indian woman loves her white husband only for what he possesses--because she works less hard, eats better food, is allowed to dress and adorn herself in a better way (Weist 1983, 32).

Interestingly however, had they overcome cultural barriers, and attempted to understand Native culture, there would no longer have been the need to "civilize" the Native American, which became a prime motive of the colonizers.

Ironically, contributing to the confines of the stereotype, Bataille and Sands point out, was the honorable notion of "subordination of the individual to the collective need of the tribe" (Bataille and Sands 1984, 4).

Native American women are individuals, but have characteristics in common, according to Vine Deloria, Sr. In an interview in 1981 with Bataille and Sands, he said Native American women are skilled at creating a community of women. Modesty and responsibility for the steadfastness of tribal ideals and values are main attributes. He said "Indian men did not hold office without approval of the mature women of a tribe" (Deloria 1984, 18). He also stated that Native American women

have traditionally had this power. Native American women are willing to sacrifice immediate goals for the well-being of the family members, and are willing to defer but not forego personal goals, thus creating a pattern of attainment of personal satisfaction in maturity. According to Deloria, they are willing to endure considerable hardship, but achieve an inner strength that leads to serenity and wisdom in later years because of it (Deloria 1984, 18-19).

Therefore, as the authors of I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers state, it has been culturally very difficult for Native women to write autobiographically because they traditionally felt the individual was not important (Swann and Krupat 1987, xii).

The act of writing about themselves, not of their tradition, became an uncomfortable, if not painful procedure and was utilized only as a survival technique. As Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, a contemporary South Dakota writer, says in I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers, "Writing, for me, then, is an act of defiance born of the need to survive" (Swann and Krupat 1987, 57).

There was egalitarianism operating among many Native American societies during early colonization, but

it was ignored by the incoming Europeans. In the words of Grace Black Elk:

> The Lakota have no word for "sexist."
> The White man does.
> The Lakota does not put his name to his child.
> White men do.
> For the Lakota, property is the possession of the woman. The generations are the responsibility of the woman. Power is thus in the hands of women...
> Lakota women are the strength of the people (Black Elk 1988, 8).

The colonists believed the Native American society was a dying society and they strove to record it as such. For example, Swann and Krupat state in I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers,

> Early in the twentieth century, Native American autobiography was pursued by those interested not in the historical record but rather in the cultural or ethnographic record. It was, for the most part, the university-trained professional anthropologists, students of Franz Boas, who sought to record Indian lives in print as part of the great and urgent project of "ethnographic salvage" (Swann and Krupat 1987, x-xi).

It was believed that the race would vanish. They sought only to preserve, in the museum or the library, traces of lives and cultures that could not have a continuing existence anywhere else (Swann and Krupat 1987, x-xi). Supporting Paula Gunn Allen's "Progressive Fallacy," these collections were done only as a way to study a vanishing people. Franz Boas is quoted as saying in 1911 that the proportion of people with Native

American blood "is so insignificant that it may well be disregarded," and that they had "vanished comparatively rapidly" (Boas 1968, xi).

There were some early attempts by Native American women to present their side of the story in fictional works. These writings did not receive readership, however and thus their stories did not become known.

Zitkala Sa's image of Tusee, explained earlier, is a different image of Native American women than the Pocahontas model, since the powerful feminine figure represented by Tusee rescues and saves a Native American male, not a white male. Zitkala Sa effectively refutes the dysfunctional image of Native American women created by white men. This image of Tusee is not the one of the Pocahontas myth, because Tusee supported rather than betrayed her people.

While Ella Deloria's Waterlily is a superb recreation of traditional woman's role, written to demonstrate the power of Native American women, the influence of Boas becomes apparent in her other book, Speaking of Indians. In it she becomes a proponent of the dominant culture's philosophy. This can be understood by considering her years of work with Boas. She had been his student at Columbia and later worked with him on the Sioux language (Deloria 1979, xiv).

In her essay "Toward a New Community" in Speaking of Indians, she seems to be promoting assimilation. She believes that Native Americans with involved descriptive names should simplify them in order to avoid embarrassment (Deloria 1979, 100). She advocates name changing to avoid ridicule. She encourages her people to join the progressive world.

Deloria became a victim of patriarchal thinking. She had been raised at a time of devaluing of Native Americans, and because of her work, she inadvertently adopted the progressive fallacy and the thinking that was changing the power of Native American women and contributing to the killing of her culture.

Deloria conveys the traditional image of women as powerful, but says that era is over. She says the Church and the government should sit down together in their common concern for Native American people, that "they would know better what they were all working for and be able to direct the people to a responsive goal" (Deloria 1979, 105). Deloria loves her people, but regards them as children who need to mature.

Deloria talks of the enlightenment of her people. She says churches and schools and the government will produce good Americans who will

> . . . want to participate in the larger thought and life of the land and not be given special work scaled down to their abilities, as if those abilities were static, or to their needs, as if those needs must always be limited to tribal life. Tribal life is only a phase in human development anyway (Deloria 1979, 97).

Deloria claims that "Indians need the government to help them materially and the schools to help them mentally" but most of all the Native Americans need the church "to help them spiritually" (Deloria 1979, 97).

She claims it is "to the Church they must look for strength to withstand temptation, wisdom to make right choices, steadfastness to see things through, and hope and faith in the eventual victory of right" (Deloria 1979, 97). She continues: "No other institution is so well equipped to offer friendship, sympathy, wise counsel, and unselfish assistance to all who need it" (Deloria 1979, 98). Ironically, this was a death sentence for Native people, since the Christian Church, as introduced by the Europeans, was the main preserver of the patriarchal model.

Ella Deloria obviously had the best interest of her people at heart. She saw the suffering and humiliation they were enduring and knew of their strength. Unfortunately, she became a victim of the patriarchal, hierarchical thinking prevalent at the time.

In 1929, Zitkala Sa was asked to speak at a conference on Native American concerns at Lake Mohonk Mountain House in New York State. In part she said: "Home is home, wherever it may be, and the children's love for their parents and the parents' love for the children brings a heart tie superior to anything the missionary can do for us . . . (Zitkala Sa 1965, 119). This Native American woman had the insight to see through the hypocrisy of the church and government in a way that Ella Deloria did not.

The insight we might have had has been denied, Green points out in "Native American Women." In American histories traditionally, we learned only of "distant princesses and saints" who served white men, but never of "matriarchal, matrifocal and matrilineal societies" (Green 1980, 250).

In my youth I was always unsettled over the absence of Native Americans. Their absence worried me. What happened to them? I felt a connection to them, but what was I connected to? I have come to believe the connection is a feminine value system. In my involvement with Native American culture, I have come to realize the power of feminine force. The lessons of the Sacred Tree provide insight into that force:

> The second meaning of the Sacred Tree is nourishment. This nourishment is represented by the fruit of the tree. On one level the fruit of the Sacred Tree represents the nourishment a mother gives to her children and all the care children need in growing up . . . a deeper meaning of the fruit is the nurturing human beings receive through interactions with the human . . . physical and spiritual environments . . . these environments are represented by the mother . . . and eating the fruit of the tree represents our interaction with all the aspects of life that nourish and sustain our growth and development . . . (Personal letter from a traditional Native American, January 9, 1989).

The regard for feminine force is evident from these words. This passage is bursting with feminine metaphors and provides insight into a full natural life, not a denial of personhood. These metaphors are missing in the religious teachings of the conquering culture. In fact, the metaphor of "eating fruit from the sacred tree" is used to portray the descent of humankind into sin and is directly attributable to a woman.

According to Allen in The Scared Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions, "There is reason to believe that many Native American tribes thought the primary potency in the Universe was female, and that understanding authorizes all tribal activities" (Allen 1986, 26).

According to Judalon, a Canadian Indian woman who was interviewed for a West German feminist monthly,

> In my mother's tribe, the Mohawks, the women made all the decisions. In the Longhouse (meeting place) the clan mothers would gather and sit on one side. The chiefs would sit on the other side. On the other two sides, the rest of the people would sit and the current problems would be discussed. The clan mothers would decide what should happen, but the men would speak for them. The men never made decisions. It was the way in the tribe and also in a clan's household. The women were responsible and made the decisions (Judalon 1983, 6).

Judalon continues:

> Everything has changed since we've had contact with the Europeans. First our leaders were brainwashed. They became vain and thought that they alone could decide things, like the European men. Over the years everything has turned around. Today many Indian men behave like European men (Judalon 1983, 6).

In the same article, another Canadian Indian woman, Dinah says:

> They've turned our men around the way they want them, so that they have lost their direction and no longer know which way they should be going (Connexions, 6).

Native American women did not deny their femininity. They were honored because of it. They assumed the responsibility of feminine power and valued the "importance of the puberty rite . . . which has served as an indication of the connection between women's biological and social functions." Traditionally a woman's "moontime" was a time of isolation, not because it was unclean or evil but because of the "power that descended on her." This power was respected by Native

American males, while white society, male and female, has seen it as a curse (Kidwell 1978, 115).

According to Kidwell, at least in Woodland societies, "The division of labor along sex lines . . . was a function of the physical demands of hunting in harsh climatic conditions for the men and the physical requirements of motherhood for the women" (Kidwell 1978, 116). But because of European male stereotypes and a value system totally revolving around the male, the words of Marie Chona were lost:

> You see, we <u>have</u> power. Men have to dream to get power from the spirits and they think of everything they can--song and speeches and marching around, hoping that the spirits will notice them and give them some power. But we <u>have</u> power . . . Children. Can any warrior make a child, no matter how brave and wonderful he is? (Chona 1984, 48)

Maria Campbell, a Canadian Metis woman, writes in her autobiography, "Halfbreed," that according to her grandmother, "The white man saw . . . a more powerful weapon than anything else with which to beat the Halfbreeds, and he used it and still does today. Already they are using it on you. They try to make you hate your people" (Campbell 1984, 119).

Victims of patriarchal-influenced stereotypes, Native American women were subjected to degradation. The degradation that devalued them as people and kills spirit and hope. These negative stereotypes also prompted their

inhumane treatment by the soldiers of the United States Army, who could not "see with more than one eye" (Lame Deer 1972, 190).

CHAPTER IV

THE RICHNESS OF WOMEN'S POWER IN THE RECENT RHETORIC OF NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

Rhetoric

I have been searching
lost
alone
I have been searching
for so many years

I have been searching
Old Woman

and I find her
in
mySelf

Anne Cameron
Daughters of Copper Woman

Threads of memory from a pre-patriarchy-past support the Native American valuing of the feminine, a way not found in the dominant United States society. Because of the knowledge and wisdom learned in legend and myth, indigenous people respected the feminine because it represented life in its every meaning. There was an egalitarian sense of being that honored all forms of life as well, with no dominance evident.

They thought and lived in metaphor, seeking to be the eagle, the bear, the wolf, the river, the rock. Integrated intimately with nature, they honored the earth. With this respect, it was against their nature to devalue the feminine, the source from which it all came. With this ideology, they lived in North America for at least twenty thousand years, with populations of about two million, without significantly damaging their environment, and in harmony with it.

The horror that descended upon them, discussed in Chapter III, is only now being addressed by Native American women. These women are slowly delineating the cultural genocide that destroyed a people and has nearly destroyed the earth.

With awareness growing, they speak of regaining their lost power by remembering a past in a way that most feminists are unable to, a past before patriarchy.

> There are women everywhere with fragments
> when we learn to come together we are whole
> when we learn to recognize the enemy
> we will come to recognize what we need to know
> to learn how to come together . . . (Cameron 1981, 147).

These words express what is happening in the world of Native American women as they "know the many smiling faces of . . . [the] enemy . . . know the pretense that is the weapon used" (Cameron 1981, 147).

As they come to know the power that was theirs, they are regaining that power. This knowledge is being expressed in their rhetoric, in their writing, and in their actions.

Paula Gunn Allen says a poem is a "recording of an event in the mind." According to Allen, spirituality is always evident in Native American poetry (Allen 1987, 18).

This spirituality may be manifest in memory, a living entity. According to Joy Harjo, the Creek writer, people forget that "everything they say, everything they do, think, feel, dream, has effect, which to me is being Indian . . ." She believes this is a "tribal consciousness" or, in other words, living memory (Harjo, 1987, 93).

The consciousness in Harjo's poetry comes from what she says is a "way of believing or sensing things" and from an idea that the "world is not disconnected or separate." She sees remembering as "occurring, not just going back, but occurring right now, and also future occurrence so that you can remember things in a way that makes what occurs now beautiful" (Harjo 1987, 93).

She believes that writing poetry is one way to communicate ideas that are nearly impossible to speak of. She explains, ". . . the center of tribal languages

often has nothing to do with things, objects, but contains a more spiritual sense . . ." Harjo believes North America to be "an Indian continent" and she thinks the bitter experiences of Native Americans "can be used to move the world." This can be a powerful force of good, built from conserved anger. She says: "I'm aware of the power of language which isn't meaningless words . . . Sound is an extension of all, and sound is spirit, motion" (Harjo 1987,94-100).

This power of language, being utilized at last by Native American women, is growing. They express a knowledge, a wisdom, and a spirituality needed to strengthen the faltering feminist force and to encourage the environmentalist movement of the last decade of the twentieth century.

Rebecca Tsosie, in her article "Changing Women: The Cross-Currents of American Indian Feminine Identity" in the American Indian Culture and Research Journal, states:

> . . . contemporary Indian women writers have chosen to express both the diversity of Indian people, and the centrality of an Indian "ethos" which emphasizes "life," "motion" and "balance" against the polarized madness of Western technology (Tsosie 1988, 2-3).

Tsosie believes Native American women are using a natural power to "refute the victimization and oppression which characterized Western patriarchal power structures" (Tsosie 1988, 2-3).

This force of good built from conserved anger is manifesting itself through memory and remembering and rhetoric. Rebecca Tsosie states: "It is essential to realize that maintaining one's ties to the traditional past, to the ritual and symbolic structures of one's culture, imparts a significant sense of 'power'" (Tsosie 1988, 17).

Native American women are actively reestablishing that power through new words and are expressing a knowledge that has previously been ignored. They are finding and using English words for ancient tribal knowledge. They are maintaining and building their culture after years of personal and tribal destruction. A destruction that created catastrophic dissonance.

In Bruchac's interview with the Chickasaw poet Linda Hogan, she expresses her view on dissonance. She says the

> U.S. is organized socially and politically and economically in ways to keep people without vibrance or energy. To keep them working hard, thinking they will "make it" if they work harder, all at the expense of their real lives (Hogan 1987, 123-124).

Native American culture has continued to be the antithesis of the modern political technocracy. It functions as a thorn in the side of the majority culture, but at the expense of the Native American.

Hogan says there has been dissonance in her life but "creative work is a way to order it" (Hogan 1987, 123-24). She believes that to be silent is not to be honest. Consequently, she has spoken of her strong feelings about preserving life, rather than destroying it. She says:

> I have never really thought that hunting was a particularly appropriate thing because most people who hunt do not need to. It becomes a death sport, a very different thing than it once was (Hogan 1987, 133).

It is a destruction of life. It is not for survival. All cruelty, she believes, is needless, all fighting. "I did not want to be silent about the things that were very important . . . survival is very important." In this way she indicates the unity humans have with all of life. She clearly differentiates between the hunting and gathering styles of early traditional cultures, who honored and respected animals, and the death sport hunting has become (Hogan 1987, 133).

Many Native American women are working in courageous and creative ways against the dissonance and the destruction. They are becoming teachers of ancient

knowledge that may be applicable and useful not only in restoring their power, but in restoring the world.

Wendy Rose, the Hopi poet, anthropologist, and teacher, says her poems were written as a survival kit. Her sense of knowing and being seems exceptional. She sees humans as a conscious part of the earth that emerges, lives for a time, and then returns to be part of the earth. She explains:

> Well, you know, the rocks are alive and all the components of a tree, for instance, live. A pine cone falls down from the tree and it's alive. It carries the life of the tree in the seeds that are in the pine cone. And I think the parts of the body must be the same way. The brain isn't all there is to human life. The consciousness that's inside the skull is not all there is (Rose 1987, 262).

Perhaps Native American women lost their power through silence. This silence, attributable in part to a cultural tradition and in part to a language gap is being overcome. Now talking and writing are truly tactics for survival, of not only themselves, but the entire culture. They realize the importance. According to Linda Hogan: "The poetry writing was very important to me. It was a way of trying to define who I was . . . writing had everything to do with my survival" (Rose 1987, 121).

Louise Erdrich, Turtle Mountain Chippewa, states: "We are taught to present a demure face to the

world and yet there is a kind of wild energy behind it . . . that is transformational energy . . ." (Erdich 1987, 82). The use of this transformational energy could build the future.

Luci Tapahonso, of the Navajo Nation, says many of her poems are "memory poems . . . the past determines what our present is or what our future will be. I don't think there is really a separation of the three" (Tapahonso 1987, 275).

She believes part of human strength lies in storytelling, which gives us the ability to go on. It also gives us the ability to see ourselves in unity and in community with others. She says:

> What we are ties in with stories and the future . . . people are no different than spiritual beings . . . we can see on those different levels . . . we are the Earth . . . we are no different from the animals . . . (Tapahonso 1987, 282).

Diane Burns, of Anishinabe and Chemehuevi ancestry, lives in New York City, but she still gets stories from home from her grandfather in North Dakota. He can tell her "what happened . . . by this tree . . . that rock . . ." She finds, especially in New York City, that community is important, including relatives and extended family (Burns 1987, 52).

Roberta Hill Whiteman, a member of the Oneida tribe of Wisconsin, wanted to learn her cultural language

as a child. But her father, apparently as a result of the "change agents," and in an understandable attempt to protect her from ridicule, told her that there was nothing positive to be gained from learning the language. He told her that people would make fun of her. In spite of that handicap, she has learned, however, that:

> Indian people have an awareness of . . . a different sort of time and a different sort of space . . . a connection of a moving, living, and alive time, an alive space, a sense of everything being alive . . . this connection to the earth is found in myth . . . things are instantaneous . . . space between stars is not just empty space . . . this idea will become more focused over the next hundred years . . . the conception of reality is changing . . . things can't be pigeonholed and classified and separated and analyzed (Whiteman 1987, 334-35).

She feels that the mythic world is very much alive,

> . . . we are close to the earth . . . when you dance you're close to the earth . . . you massage the earth . . . and I like to think of that connection, that the earth is telling us things (Whiteman 1987, 334-35).

Literature

The well-known Native American women poets, like the ones just discussed, are creatively expressing their cultural death, their rebirth, and the regaining of their cultural spirit.

Other Native American women are also expressing the same knowledge. A Gathering of Spirit: Writing and Art by North American Indian Women, published by Beth Brant in 1984, contains works of mostly unknown Native American women. Their words also express those threads of memory from the pre-patriarchy past, and reveal what Rayna Green believes, that it is in non-scholarly literature such as poetry that we find the "real experience of Indian women's lives" (Green 1980, 263).

Amber Coverdale Sumrall defines the knowledge and power found in the silence that many people seem to fear in "Owl Women:"

> Fire wings soar into forest depths
> glazed with moonspill
> there are no illusions here
> fogwebs hide the source of magic.
> Listen to the silence
> as it echos around you,
> ancient spirits dance in it.
> Take heed
> guard your secrets
> bury your treasures well,
> your knives, your crystals,
> your feathers and shells...
> All your sacred things.
> Like ancestors bones
> they will be stolen,
> pulverized into
> instant powder to feed
> white men's souls (Sumrall 1984, 18).

Diane Glancy writes of remembering the ancient times in terms of the present in "I Am Not the Woman I Am." Glancy concisely time-binds past to present. In a few short lines she tells the history of Native Americans, A.A. (after arrival), and the horror that descended upon them. She is able to connect and remember.

> You are looking at my ghost,
> not the woman I am, nor even was
> when prairie buckled under black wagons, clammed
> shut the grip of plains.
> The yellow flowers, the curd of watery faces;
> wagons like fish on banks, flopping,
> gulping for last breath. Our men, watched them
> from the hill; we hear the talk of their silvery
> breath.
> Our broken tribes weep on spirit trails where the man
> with a sword in his gizzard and outspread arms
> calls us to the prairie's rusted gate (Glancy 1984, 41).

In "Trading Post--Winslow, Arizona," Terri Meyette picturesquely portrays an image of cultural genocide with vivid scenes of understanding:

> Momma said I had eyes like a hawk.
> Dust, red earthen clay clings
> to emerald green velveteen skirts,
> flashing opposites
> as they quietly sway past a tiny face.
> Silver and turquoise slides from a wrinkled wrist.
> crosses the counter to meet its fate
> a pawn ticket.
> Voices grunt and haggle price,
> two bags of flour appear in exchange.
> Faces wrinkled and worn
> like ancient ruins,
> browned like fry bread
> parade into the trading post.
> Tourists with knobby knees white socks

and black leather shoes parade out.
Cameras around smog-soaked necks
dead pawn in their white clutches;
they buy history in a blanket,
family traditions in a squash-blossom necklace
the old lady walks home
with two bags of flour (Meyette 1984, 42).

In the next poem, "Celebration," also by Meyette, she empathetically expresses her feelings for small things unnoticed by the bomb testers. She reclaims lost power by challenging the policies of the "button pushers."

They say no one died.
tiny desert flower
micro beetle bug
are they not life?
Their bag of bones
blown into the wind
captured in white dust storms
washed down polluted rivers
are they not dead?

They say no one died.
Scientist, unconscious
mushroom button pushers,
Secretary of Defense what's his name,
President what's his name
when will they be tried
for imposing fantasies and celebrations
on all life forms?

It wasn't enough
in "45"
Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

They say no one died.
Nevada desert
1000 miles into her bowels
earth melted.

radiation, radiation, radiation,
radiation.

oozed into blood
of Shoshone and Paiute.
The bomb lasted minutes
the intent lasts generations
in the womb of Creation, herself.

They say no one died.
Closing their eye,
They dismissed death
dismissed life
became blinded
by white flash
their God.

They say no one died.
As thousands of beetles
fell through the sky
and rabbit hair turned into
fur coats protecting atoms
as they floated into water.
They won't look
they will just say
no one died (Meyette 1984, 60-61).

In "Circumstance," Alice Bowen expresses the devastating results of the knowledge expressed in the previous poems.

sweet, sweet wine
make me forget
the decay of heart
that raped the land
killed our intimate friends

sweet, red wine
cherished warmth
making existence bearable
on this once
beautiful land

cheap, sour wine
comfort
console me
I stand stripped
of dignity,
and wise, old ways (Bowen 1984, 76).

Finally in "Tremolo," Joan Shaddox Isom expresses triumph in finding herself:

> A woman is making the tremolo into the wind
> No longer is it the song she once made
> For her husband and sons in battle
> Now
> She sings it for herself
> This woman is a strong woman
> Her face is etched in lines
> That have not yet made an ending
> In another time she would be called "man-hearted"
> But now she has turned her back to the wind
> and the four winds take her cry and carry
> it to the four directions, to all-women
> And her tremolo is a new song
> She sings in a voice of rolling thunder
> Saying,
> Listen, women! The new word for strong
> is "Woman-hearted" (Isom 1984, 226).

These poems demonstrate Anne Cameron's ideas of the "fragments," "recognizing the enemy," and of learning "to come together" to be "whole." They know "the pretense that is the weapon used." These poems represent the centrality of Native American ethics, emphasizing "life," "motion," and "balance" against the madness of patriarchy and Western technology. A natural power is being used to refute the victimization of patriarchy. These writers are finding "power" by knowing themselves and maintaining ties to the past. In this way they connect to the traditional strength and power of the feminine.

Action

In April of 1981, the Ohoyo Resource Center of Wichita Falls, Texas, sponsored an American Indian Women's Educational Equity Awareness Conference at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Drawing from the many diverse tribal representatives speaking and participating, a book was published. Ohoyo Makachi: Words of Today's American Indian Women, is a "first collection of Oratory by American Indian/Alaska Native Women." Ohoyo Makachi is Choctaw for "Women Speak." Native American women are speaking, and demonstrating that action is now appropriate. This is consistently obvious in the speeches printed in the book.

Owanah Anderson, a Choctaw woman and Founder and Director of the Ohoyo Resource Center, speaks of no longer lamenting the past. Rather, she speaks of charting new courses and exploring alternatives. She states in her keynote address, "Charting New Directions":

> We survived manifest destiny; we survived White men's diseases; we survived the Trail of Tears which was trod by the foremothers of many of us here today. We survived corrupt Indian agents and insensitive White school teachers. We've survived poverty and pestilence and federal bureaucracy . . . We shall prevail as Indian women . . . we will be a force to be reckoned with (Anderson 1981, 10).

Shirley Hill Witt, of Akwesasne Mohawk heritage, believes it is important for Native people to be able to move between the "Indian" world and the "White man's" world, and qualifies this by stating:

> This term, "The White man's world," by the way, is not to be taken as a quaint archaic phrase: the world of the White woman is, for the most part, invisible to Indians. Even if it weren't invisible, it is irrelevant, since the White man's world is the one making an impact upon Indian life and Indian individuals. It is still the Great White Father (sic), who determines the quality of life for Native people as well as all other Americans, male and female (Witt 1981, 11-12).

She points out that while "traditional cultures viewed women's roles as primarily being involved in family and household needs," there were many tribal groups that expected "women to play key roles in the political and religious areas of Native life." In the modern world it is expected the women will move into the "Anglo world of work and education," and that this movement is not "necessarily seen as a major threat to traditional concepts of women's behavior" (Witt 1981, 13-14).

This idea explains the key differences between the values of traditionally-thinking Native American women and the inherent concepts in feminist thought. When feminists moved into the white man's world of work

and education, changes in the concepts of women's behavior were implied.

The ongoing problem of alcoholism was addressed by Leah Harjo, a Creek/Euchee woman, who as Director of the Indian Women's Alcoholism Program, says:

> . . . we were and still are, faced with the stigma of the "drunken woman." In the dominant society, drinking is socially acceptable for men and is becoming more acceptable for women. But it's still mostly a man's world (Harjo 1981, 97).

Harjo believes the Native American woman alcoholic is a "woman that everybody dumps on." Consequently, the Native American woman substance abuser has a "terrifically low sense of self-esteem, a low sense of self-worth and almost no self-love" (Harjo 1981, 97). Therefore, in an attempt to deal with the special needs of Native American women alcoholics, her organization has begun innovative out-patient counseling to help Native American women rebuild self-respect and self-love.

These examples illustrate the scope of thought, actions, and oratory taking place across the United States.

Action in South Dakota is also occurring. "Women take on tribal alcoholism," as reported by Doris Giago in the Sioux Falls Argus Leader dated 21 August 1988, informs us that certain Sioux women are "attacking the source of their social, physical and psychological

problems." They are directing their energies toward eliminating alcohol abuse on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. They are looking back to their traditions and combining them with "modern techniques." Their traditional values of "respect, wisdom, generosity and fortitude" are combined with education and law to produce a workable strategy against the silent weapon introduced by the Europeans. A silent weapon which is continuing the practice of cultural genocide begun centuries ago, the cruelty of which, according to Dr. Charles Woodard of South Dakota State University, "was even greater than we supposed" (Woodard 1988).

With their actions they are reestablishing the powerful woman's role. They are denying the Pocahontas stereotype and proving the real woman is not the "squaw" caricature. They are challenging patriarchy by proving they are women of power, not to be discredited by the system:

> The Indian woman is and has been strong within her culture . . . the trappers who desired Indian women, the missionaries whose religion dictated that women be defined as inferior, the painters who saw only romantic figures--all were viewing women from a decidedly ethnocentric position . . . (Bataille and Sands 1984, 134).

The Lakota women of Pine Ridge are demonstrating their "growing assertiveness . . ." (Bataille and Sands,

1984, 135). As their knowledge of their own history becomes known and accessible to them, through writings of contemporary Native American women, they are demonstrating the power they once had.

> Indian women insist on taking their traditional places as healers, legal specialists, and tribal governors. Their call is for a return to Native American forms which they insist, invoke men and women in complementary, mutual roles (Green 1980, 264).

The scholar and teacher, as well as a speaker, writer and poet, Dr. Beatrice Medicine has taken action by speaking out about the discrimination she experienced in her hometown where she has retired. In a letter to the editor of the Mobridge (South Dakota) Tribune, which was subsequently reprinted in the Lakota Times dated 2 January 1990, she expresses her anger at being refused participation in a Christmas dinner:

> I heard, over the local radio station, that the Senior Citizen's Center was having a Christmas dinner and "Everybody was welcome!"--and to call for rides.
>
> I called, and jokingly asked, "Do you pick up Indians?" A woman, also laughingly, said, "Yes," and took my address.
>
> I did not give my name. Within five minutes, a male called, and said that the event "was for members only."
>
> I told him that in the autumn . . . I had gone to the center building. While there, I asked about participation. A younger female employee said the center was open to all. There was no mention of membership.
>
> Beatrice Medicine

Dr. Medicine expresses her amazement and alarm at this discrimination. From her position as a strong Lakota elder, she fights by illuminating the racism and speaking out against the prejudice.

Dr. Medicine's action exemplifies what Rayna Green says in "Native American Women," "Indian women do not, on the whole, document change, they make change . . ." (Green 1980, 263). These changes are now necessary for the survival of Native American culture, for the feminist survival as a force, and ultimately, for the survival of the earth.

Endurance is greater than politics and economics. True knowledge is remembering what you already know. Native American women have endured and are remembering what they knew in the pre-patriarchy past. As an act of survival, they now communicate their knowledge and understandings through speaking and writing. Their call is not for more data gathering, classifying, segmenting, and evaluating as if they were a plant species. Their call is for acceptance, understanding and communication of the knowledge that is already known.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Summary

As J. Samuel Bois has said, "We seldom question the common sense of our own language" (Bois 1978, 224). Because of this phenomenon, Native American women were stereotyped, and became the objects of a cultural genocide from which they still suffer. My study indicates that Native American women enjoyed egalitarianism and power within their culture. This original power was generated and supported by cultural values of honor for the feminine powers of the universe. The traditional oral histories of Native Americans contain significant recognition of female power.

The passing of knowledge through the generations has been effected through oral histories. Their myths and legends contained profound truths and established guidelines for proper behavior. This method of communication is very personal. It represented a form of knowledge that was honored among tribal members. This was their rhetoric. This was their value system. It

established the interrelatedness and connectedness of living things. It established Native American women's social power. It exemplifies Benjamin Whorf's idea that "each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas, but rather is a shaper of ideas" (Whorf 1956, 212). The literature explored in the preceding chapters strongly supports the idea that a state of distinctive equilibria existed before contact by the European culture.

Dissonance began occurring for Native American women when colonization and language loss began. The Europeans initiated a system of destruction by causing loss of group prestige, economic loss, loss of personal prestige, and loss of security in life styles, along with a sense of guilt. According to Charles Larson in the text Persuasion Reception and Responsibility, these are all ways to cause dissonance (Larson 1986, 135-37). For Native American women, it was an unbalancing. Everything the "knew" no longer worked for them. Their system was shattered.

According to Paula Gunn Allen in The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions, these destructive objectives were met by the Europeans by "effecting the social transformation from egalitarian, gynecentric systems to hierarchical, patriarchal systems"

(Allen 1986, 41). The steps taken were: displacing the primacy of female as creator and replacing them with male-gendered creators, destroying tribal governing institutions and the philosophies that are their foundation, pushing the people off their land thereby depriving them of their economic livelihood, and replacing the clan structure by the nuclear family. She states:

> . . . each of these parts of the overall program of degynocraticization is subject to image control and information control. Recasting archaic tribal versions of tribal history, customs, institutions, and the oral tradition increases the likelihood that the patriarchal revisionist versions of tribal life, skewed or simply made up by patriarchal non-Indians and patriarchalized Indians, will be incorporated into the spiritual and popular traditions of the tribes. This is reinforced by the loss of rituals, medicine societies, and entire clans through assimilation and dying off of tribal members familiar with the elder rituals and practices (Allen 1986, 42).

Allen claims that "the oral tradition has prevented the complete destruction . . . of tribal ways . . ." (Allen 1986, 45). The oral tradition has continued the connection to the past, and has given Native American women writers the strength to survive. It has sustained their value system. Through their writing and their creativity, they are able to "order" the dissonance. The oral tradition, continued and contained now in writing, adapts to the "flow of the

present while never relinquishing its connection to the past" (Allen 1986, 45).

Because the women belonging to European males were victims of the patriarchal belief system to which their men adhered, they could not "see" that Native American women were their sisters. That both groups were victims of patriarchy was not immediately obvious to them. Consequently, the feminist movement, instead of attempting to regain lost power, attempted to prove equality with men. Coming from the low position in a hierarchical structured society, this has proven difficult, if not impossible.

Native women, given the same blindfolders, have nevertheless remembered a time before patriarchy, and have drawn on that remembering to reestablish their traditional worth. With anger and bitterness they comprehend their victimization, and they speak to it. "Scream the bloody truth of how we've been raped in every possible way, and then rise up and dig the beauty of our people," exclaims Cree singer and songwriter Buffy Sainte-Marie (Sainte Marie 1977, 171-72). Native American women writers are voicing these threads of memory, these connections to the pre-patriarchy past, which cannot be forgotten. The attempts of the conquering culture to destroy Native Americans' connections have failed. As

Tsewaa, a Tewa woman from New Mexico states: "But remember; there will always be someone who will remember the way, the instruction, the beginning" (Tsewaa 1977, 174).

With language we know our universe and share that knowledge with our community. That process of sharing knowledge, or communication, was broken for Native American people. It is a testimony to Native American women that they have remembered, since their normal means of communication has had to change and reemerge in the form of writing. Now, writing is a way to share the knowledge. With rebirth of their power, communication returns. With the return of communication, rebirth will continue and with it the power of self-knowledge.

Conclusions

Part of Benjamin Lee Whorf's hypothesis is that the "picture of the universe shifts from tongue to tongue" and is exemplified in the preceding material. A refusal on the part of most American's to learn Native American languages (or any foreign language for that matter), makes Whorf's work all the more amazing. Through his studies, he realized that Native American languages led to a "different mode of perceiving and conceiving things" (Whorf 1956, 17). Much of his work deals with basic differences in perceiving time and

space. In fact, as a result of his work he discovered that the "Hopi language contains no reference to 'time,' either explicit or implicit" (Whorf 1956, 58).

In The Sacred Hoop, Paula Gunn Allen says that ". . . basic assumptions about the universe and, therefore, the basic reality experienced by tribal peoples and by Western peoples are not the same . . ." (Allen 1986, 55).

Research in this area is weak. In fact in the area of Speech Communication only one rhetorical paper was discovered. This paper, which was presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association in New Orleans in November of 1988 by Kathleen M. German is titled "Mythic Functions of Time in Seattle's 1855 Address." The author analyzes and investigates myth through an exploration of its rhetorical functions in Chief Seattle's speech, "The Indian's Night Promises to be Dark." She concludes: "The nature of time in this speech is multidimensional . . . time cannot be viewed just chronologically but must be understood cyclically as well" (German 1988, 13).

Suggestions for Further Study

Rhetorical analysis of Native American women's values as expressed in their contributions to literature need to be explored. Rhetorical analysis of their oratory is lacking. Studies in interpersonal relations via communication styles of Native American women is non-existent. The difficulties they have encountered learning to express thoughts in English could be explored.

The only independently owned Native American newspaper, The Lakota Times, originated and resides in South Dakota and provides an excellent source for collection of materials. The South Dakota Indian Education Association meets yearly in South Dakota and would provide opportunity to gather data. A return to traditional ways is an on-going move among many Native Americans, with a more open willingness to share these teachings since the Native American Freedom of Religion Act was passed in 1978. However, since there is an inherent reluctance to express this knowledge due to historical persecution, care must be taken to demonstrate sensitivity if interviewing procedures are used. The penal system of South Dakota contains an extremely high number of Native American women and would provide a possible source for collection of data.

Studies in the area of Native American women and Speech Communication could contribute to better understanding and ultimately to the breaking down of racial barriers. These studies could provide enlightenment for feminists as well as environmentalists. Ultimately our educational system, which has traditionally omitted study of some of the most eloquent orators, could also benefit and perhaps at last we could "learn to see with more than one eye" (Lame Deer 1972, 190).

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